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Provisional

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New York

President:	Mr. Wittig	(Germany)
Members:	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Ms. Čolaković
	Brazil	Mrs. Viotti
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	Colombia	Mr. Osorio
	France	Mr. Araud
	Gabon	Mr. Messone
	India	Mr. Vinay Kumar
	Lebanon	Ms. Ziade
	Nigeria	Mrs. Ogwu
	Portugal	Mr. Moraes Cabral
	Russian Federation	Mr. Pankin
	South Africa	Mr. Crowley
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
	United States of America	Ms. Rice

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2011/381)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2011/381)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Afghanistan, Canada, Japan, Pakistan and Turkey to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Staffan de Mistura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Pedro Serrano, Acting Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2011/381, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security.

I now give the floor to Mr. De Mistura.

Mr. De Mistura: The last time I briefed the Security Council (see S/PV.6497), as the Council is aware, I insisted, against the rules, on allowing Ambassador Tanin to speak first, as a sign of attention and respect to the growing need for the Afghan people to be recognized as a sovereign country. But this time, Ambassador Tanin has insisted, with me, to go back to the rules, to show that Afghanistan intends to stick to international rules. Therefore, with his permission, I will apply the old approach and take the floor as he kindly requested me to do.

We meet today at the moment when we are at a special crossroads. July is a significant month in 2011, as decisions have been taken that relate to the beginning of transition. Transition has been announced, but it is also going to be based on the decisions taken at upcoming meetings of the international community with the Afghan authorities, starting approximately in mid-July. This is also the month when we are starting to see the gradual implementation of the decision announced in the speech by President Obama with regard to a gradual redeployment of international forces, in particular those of the United States. In other words, we are at a crossroads between national sovereignty and what comes with it, namely, responsibility and accountability, and between continuing conflict and a politically inclusive dialogue.

First of all, on the transition, it is like a train that is moving forward. According to every indicator I have — and as we heard at the meeting we had on the transition conference in Kabul — it is also on track. The transition will also of course address seven areas, provinces and cities. As usual, we will see that the devil in the details. But the transition is on track.

An issue on which we are working — and on which we should be working more, as was recognized in the meeting to which I referred — has to do with the fact that transition cannot be, and should not be, only about security. It has to be about something more. It needs to be a transition to something that the Afghan people recognize and identify with. That is why we are working together in order to ensure that the results in the social, economic and human rights aspects are linked to the transition. In that sense, while the transition is irreversible like a Swiss train, we need at the same time to make sure that it becomes solidly irreversible with regard to the socio-economic aspect.

In that context, one element that has been discussed in the past few days, and which may come up again, is the idea of seeing whether we could have some of the projects that may emerge that are related to transition linked to some type of transition dividend. In other words, there will undoubtedly be some savings on the military side. Some of it may be utilized to ensure that local Afghan authorities and the people in the areas that are being transitioned feel that there is continuing interest and substantive support for their development. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) will do its part in that regard, based on its very clear mandate, in particular to facilitate that aspect of the transition.

That leads me to my second point, which is normally the first one in Afghanistan, that is, security. As the Council knows — and there have been many reminders of this — the security situation has been an issue of concern recently. But we have to look at it in context. God knows I do so with care and caution, having just experienced tragedy on 1 April. There have been attacks on the Intercontinental Hotel. Many of us have been there and we know its iconic value. It was shocking. There have been attacks inside the city and in military hospitals, and even in the Ministry of Defence. There were attacks in Kandahar for two days, as well as attacks in Herat on the Italian provincial reconstruction team.

But let us put it into context. All the attacks were taken care of in an effective way by the Afghan military and police — albeit perhaps sometimes in a rather confusing way, as we are all in the process of training. Even at the Intercontinental Hotel, in a way, the end of the attack was supported by International Security Assistance Force helicopters. Again, however, the Afghan forces were up front.

I think that is an important point, because there is a perception of improvement in terms of the security situation, which is true. There has been a surge and there has been an improvement in the perception of the momentum being reversed. It is also true, however, that there is a constant attempt by anti-government forces — during the spring offensive, as they call it, and in the summer — to try to reverse that perception by giving signals of dramatic surgical attacks. But I must say that, so far, the first impression still prevails. The Afghans have been able to handle it. That does not mean that in the next few weeks or perhaps months, as the summer is not over, there may not be moments of great difficulty in the security situation.

That is why it is so important, first, to address the issue of civilian casualties, which is affecting the Afghan people, and, secondly, to actually go into the other phase, namely, a political search — as Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and, recently, President Obama have indicated, and as has President Karzai several times. Everybody recognizes that no military solution is conceivable in Afghanistan. We now need to move more effectively into a political search.

That means reconciliation. Where are we on that? Well, as is clear for all to see, there have been a lot of contacts. Unfortunately, there have also been leaks to the media, which have not helped those contacts. But there is clearly a need for dialogue, and we are getting indications that this will be resumed in a more concrete way very soon.

Meanwhile, the United Nations is doing its part, in close coordination with Afghan authorities and international stakeholders. We are focusing specifically only on what we are mandated to do, and where we perhaps have added value, that is, on confidence-building measures. These are important, because they are the measures that prepare for substantive discussion, which can only be carried out by the Afghans with the Afghans. They will actually have to do what we have always said, namely, ensure that this is Afghan-led.

But confidence-building measures do matter, especially at this stage. They include issues such as looking at civilian casualties and giving the Taliban a chance, if they want to be involved, to actually qualify by doing so with facts and not with words and by reducing the tremendous negative impact that they are having on the civilian population, especially in the most recent period.

Secondly, and I know this is personal judgment, but it is one based on the perception held by many in Kabul, the decision that the Council courageously took to split the list of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999) between Al-Qaida and the Taliban is certainly an indicator in the right direction, if we want to continue to push for reconciliation. To give one example, some of the members of the High Peace Council, which is the ultimate authority and to which we will refer when there is a substantive discussion, happen to still be on the list. That is very difficult to manage when we, as the United Nations and UNAMA, assist them logistically and substantively and try to travel with them and bring them around in order to make sure that we have meetings.

One area for confidence-building measures is certainly the possibility of establishing a venue — let us not call it an office — where meetings could eventually take place between the Taliban and stakeholders, in particular Afghan partners, without a feeling of insecurity and with an atmosphere of sufficient discretion. That is not yet there; but it is one of the areas.

Let me mention an additional area, which has come up in the past few weeks. It has to do with

education. If there is one area that the international community and the Afghan authorities should be proud of, in terms of improvement after the departure of the Taliban, it is education. Seven million children are currently enrolled and going to school, many of them girls. We continuously witnessed the tragic decisions taken during the Taliban's rule regarding schools in general and girls in particular. There are some indicators that they appear for the first time to be sending messages — even publicly through the Internet — that they might have learned from that mistake. We hope that this is not just a tactical decision and that they are in fact indicating their interest in not attacking schools.

There have been some contraindications. Some teachers have been affected recently, but on the whole our own research indicates that some 400 schools, newly established in certain areas that could clearly be influenced by a Taliban presence, have seen a substantial reduction of attacks. Minister Wardak has drawn my attention to this. We, together with UNICEF, will continue studying the situation; if this is a trend, we will recognize it as a confidence-building measure. But it needs to be verified.

There is one area that I think we need to refer to when we talk about reconciliation. That is reintegration. The institutional architecture is there, and all members of the Council have contributed substantially — some very substantially — to actually making sure that this is a real and well-prepared eventuality. So far, there has been some traction and momentum. More than 1,800 people are currently in the programme. But challenges exist.

First of all, it is clear that until real reconciliation takes place, it will be very difficult to see major momentum. But having it ready in order to attract and respond to possible changes is very important, and the proof is that figure of 1,800. We have some concerns and are working on how to ensure that there is sufficient vetting. I must share with the Council the fact that one of the preliminary indicators of the attack in Mazar-e-Sharif was that three out of the five people who violently and brutally killed my colleagues were actually reintegrated ex-Taliban. That shows, first of all, that we need to be very careful about vetting and that none of this is waterproof until there is a final reconciliation.

My next point is that, regardless of whether or not reconciliation takes place, without a regional context it will never be totally sustainable. That is why, over the past few months, we have been looking with great satisfaction and interest at the substantial increase in bilateral, trilateral and multilateral meetings, from the Shanghai process to the several meetings that have taken place between the Afghan, Pakistani and United States authorities. The same applies to the meetings taking place in Istanbul, in which Iran was included in addition to Pakistan and Afghanistan. We therefore hope and believe that the Istanbul meeting to take place on 2 November will be quite an opportunity for this to be addressed.

As members of the Council know, there is an international contact group. It is informal, but is growing in its impact and influence. We had a very good and constructive meeting in Kabul, where, apart from other major issues related to transition, Deputy Foreign Minister Ludin came up with an initiative that we are planning to support. The initiative will seek to determine whether we may come to some understanding in Istanbul on stability, along the lines of what was done in the Balkans some time ago or during the Helsinki process. In other words, it will seek something in writing that reassures all sides about mutually reinforced stability.

That would make more sense, of course, if there were also a mechanism to support it and a financial trust fund for regional incentives. All that may be on the table by the time of the Istanbul meeting, but we are certainly working seriously with the Afghan and Turkish authorities and all participants, regional and beyond, to get something moving in that regard.

There is no question that, at the moment, there are some clouds related to regional understandings, such as that currently prevailing on the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. This should not be overly dramatized and should, frankly, be left to the Afghans and Pakistanis to discuss. They have recently held very constructive and useful meetings, both in Islamabad and in Afghanistan, and they will be neighbours forever. We will be there for a while, but they will always be there. So while we are looking at these events with concern, we are also hopeful that this type of bilateral discussion will be a move in the right direction.

There is another issue that is important in the context of the regional environment, and that is the concern of some regional neighbours over the ongoing ambiguity about the nature of the strategic pact or understanding that may be discussed between the Afghan authorities and, in particular, the United States. Some countries have been very concerned about the possibility of permanent, large foreign bases in Afghanistan. We have been trying to reassure everyone that this does not actually seem to be the case and that it is actually up to the Afghan authorities to reassure the neighbours about the real nature of whatever strategic agreement may be reached. Having travelled in the region, I recognize that it is still an issue that we believe would be better resolved with clarity before Istanbul. We hope it will. There have been statements issued by the United States authorities — even from the highest levels in the Pentagon — trying very rightly to offer reassurance in that regard, but some additional homework would probably help to dissipate that cloud.

That leads me to another issue — counternarcotics. At a time of possible gradual changes of focus on the part of the international community in Afghanistan, there is a concern that the so-called economic environment will be changing. That is proven by facts. The military drawdown will also reduce the impact of everything that is financially linked to a substantial military presence. The particular fear of my colleagues in the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, to which I draw the Council's attention, is that the narco-economy may then become more appealing to some Afghans. There is therefore an important need for us not to forget that aspect, which as Council members know is substantively affecting not only Afghanistan but also, again, its neighbours.

That leads me to the issue of human rights. If there is one area where I believe the United Nations will be remembered in Afghanistan, it is probably the way it has held the fort and raised high the flag about the need to respect human rights. That is why the civilian casualties report is so important and has been a major irritant, frankly, particularly to the Taliban, who have told us many times that it is hurting them. We have been telling them that there is a way to avoid that — by not hurting civilians.

This has also had an impact on the interventions of the International Security Assistance Force and NATO, particularly air raids. I know that the errors that have been made are increasingly drawing the attention of the United States and NATO authorities, whereas the horrors that the Taliban have been perpetrating in many places — such as the recent attacks on the bank and a hospital — have also drawn attention, and they are annoyed by that. We hope that this will help everyone, and the Taliban in particular, to understand that there is a moment when the popular support that they believe they enjoy is being affected by the level of civilian casualties they have been causing.

The issue of women is still very important. We have 69 women in Parliament. We count on them to be able to defend what has been achieved by women in Afghanistan, but we remain worried about the reports we are getting about the many cases of concern, such as the judiciary sometimes punishing women when they move out of their homes or decide not to marry.

The same thing obviously applies to the issue of children. There have been cases of children used as suicide bombers. There have been cases of children being attacked in a way that has drawn the attention of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

On the humanitarian side, there is one area to which I need to draw the Council's attention. At the moment, the welfare programme is having a difficulty with resources. It is one of our own stars, trying to show the Afghan people that we will not abandon them at any time, as well as actually providing food to more than 6 million children. At the moment, it has had to substantially reduce the number of beneficiaries due to a lack of resources. I draw attention to that because it is an important issue for all.

Aid coherence is crucial, and it is also important to recognize that there is a body for aid coherence. It is called the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB). The JCMB is the best body; there is no need to invent a new one. The United Nations specializes in creating new bodies, so I would be reluctant to suggest one. Rather, the JCMB should be reinforced. The JCMB has the possibility and potential to deal with aid coherence. But there is a cloud — it is the Kabul Bank. I do not need to remind the Council of that, but it is an important issue that is, in a way, an obstacle to progress at the moment on the JCMB and even to the follow-up to the Kabul Conference.

That issue is not the Council's responsibility, but that of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The IMF is engaged and, to be fair to Minister Zakhilwal,

eight out of the 10 indicators that were requested to be deployed in order to reassure the international community and the IMF have been addressed, but two remain. We hope and have been contributing to drawing the attention of the IMF to the possible consequences of an Afghan default, so to speak, which is not imminent if that is not approved but is certainly of concern. At the same time, Kabul Bank is a serious issue to the Afghan authorities — $800 million is not something to gloss over. Therefore, serious attention is being focused at the moment.

The same applies to the issue with which the Council is very familiar — the parliamentary crisis. We were hoping that would not take place 10 months after the elections and six months after the President had solemnly inaugurated the Parliament. We would then have been going through an election that, while imperfect, would be handled by the Afghan institutions during a continued political process.

Unfortunately, this has not been the case. A special court has indicated that 61 members of Parliament should perhaps leave their positions. There is a current tension, as the Council is aware. Our position is the position of the Security Council — 22 December. We will not change it. The second position is that, indeed, the judiciary has the right to prosecute anyone who has committed a crime, but not to change the outcome of elections, and that the solution must be an Afghan solution and a political solution, but not a judicial solution.

We are hopeful and will continue to work on behalf of the Council, together with the Afghan authorities, to avoid prolongation of that institutional crisis. Afghanistan needs checks and balances; it needs a Parliament, an executive and a judiciary that all work together. At the moment there is a cloud, but since I am an optimist, I am not expecting much rain, yet, on that issue.

The last point I will make, with the Council's permission, is a message. This is a transition period in every sense. But there is also a message, which we must be certain the Afghans hear, that 2014 will not be 1989. They are worried, and rightly so, that for the third time during their recent history they will be graciously abandoned by the international community. I know that is not our intention and certainly not that of the United Nations or UNAMA. We are going to review our footprint. We will review the way that we must work, because transition is taking place everywhere. But we will be there — if everything is there and if the Afghans want us — for a long time. And I think that, from the international point of view, we need to constantly reassure the Afghans of that. That will help them to pass through the transition in this difficult period.

The President: I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Staffan de Mistura for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan.

Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan): At the outset, allow me to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for the month of July. I would like also to express appreciation for your personal role and Germany's prime role in dealing with Afghanistan in the Council.

I would like to extend my warmest welcome to my good friend, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Staffan de Mistura, back to the Council. I thank him for his kind remarks and compliments, for his comprehensive briefing and for his introduction of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2011/381).

As the world enters a post-bin Laden era, Afghanistan, the greatest victim of terrorism, is today at a critical juncture in its quest for peace and stability. Consistent with the outcome of the NATO Lisbon Summit, we have begun the transition process. In the coming days, we will implement the first stage of this process in seven Afghan provinces: Kabul, Panjshir, Bamiyan, the municipalities of Herat in Herat province, Mazar-e-Sharif in Balkh province, Mehtar Lam in Laghman province and Lashkar Gah in Helmand province.

Transition is a rousing call for Afghans to take the lead in national ownership and leadership and for the Government of Afghanistan to assume its sovereign responsibilities. From our point of view, transition is a carefully formulated comprehensive strategy that presupposes not only a gradual transfer of security responsibilities to Afghan authorities until the end of 2014, but also a conscientious drawdown of international forces, the accelerated training of the Afghan Army and Police, the strengthening of governance, a new regional agenda for multifaceted

cooperation, and the prospect of securing a renewed strategic partnership with the United States and NATO.

The Afghan Government continues its crucial efforts to ensure that the transition process is smooth and viable. However, there should be no doubt that, if the transition process is to succeed and remain sustainable, certain preconditions must be met. First and foremost, we look to our international partners to expedite the training and equipping of our security forces and to provide them with the necessary enablers.

Last month, United States President Obama announced the gradual drawdown of United States forces from Afghanistan. We welcome the decision and consider it to be in accordance with the recent emerging consensus between Afghanistan and the international community to move from a primarily military engagement to a more solid and enduring partnership beyond 2014. President Obama's announcement is a testament, first, to the steady ability of Afghan security forces and, secondly, to the changed momentum of the war, despite the recent vicious attacks by the Taliban.

Contrary to some interpretations, we do not see the drawdown of international forces as an end game or, as some have put it, the beginning of international disengagement from Afghanistan. In the past 10 years, much blood and sweat have been shed and many sacrifices made in order to realize our common objective of lasting peace and security in the country and the region.

The recent display of a promotional psychodrama of so-called sophisticated attacks, such as the one carried out last week in the Kabul Intercontinental Hotel or the slaughter of a dozen civilians in a hospital in Logar province is a conspicuously well-orchestrated attempt by the enemies of Afghanistan, designed to incite fear among the people, to hinder international support for Afghanistan, and to convince a war-weary audience in some countries that the war is unwinnable.

Moreover, the recent campaign seeks to sabotage the future of peace talks and undermine the prospect of reconciliation. Those who provide terrorists and extremists with money, arms and strategic guidance are equally responsible for the continued killing and brutal butchery of innocent civilians in Afghanistan. It is therefore imperative to stress the necessity of eliminating the sanctuaries that continue to produce and prepare the ruthless killers and agents of the unending destruction of Afghanistan.

Acts of terror, however, will not shake our determination to secure peace and stability in Afghanistan. We are pleased to see that an environment conducive to constructive outreach and dialogue with members of the armed opposition is now in place. The reconciliation process will be pursued as a priority, consistent with the understanding that there is no purely military solution and that the transition requires an inclusive settlement. Reconciliation aims to bring peace, prosperity and unity to the country. It is not about ceding any territorial control or accommodating any representation outside the authority of the Afghan Government. The High Peace Council is engaged in discussions with the Taliban and key actors in the region to end the violence and achieve a lasting peace. This is an effort in which all sectors of society, including women, are involved.

In addition, we are beginning to focus on the regional dimensions of the reconciliation process. We again underscore Pakistan's significant role in achieving peace and reconciliation, and in this context we emphasize the importance of constructive collaboration between our two countries. We must take the necessary confidence-building measures for that collaboration to continue. The recent armed violations of Afghanistan's eastern border through hundreds of instances of shelling and artillery fire in Kunar and Nangarhar provinces, which killed dozens of people, including women and children, have been the cause of serious alarm and concern for the people and Government of Afghanistan, and run the risk of undermining the spirit of cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan. We urge that such attacks cease immediately.

The Security Council's recent decision to separate the Taliban sanctions regime from that of Al-Qaida was an astute move in support of our peace and reconciliation initiative. It gives new impetus to our Afghan-led reconciliation process. We also appreciate the Council's decision to meet our de-listing requests, and urge increased focus on acceding to our additional requests, which remain unmet.

The recent eleventh meeting of the International *Contact Group on Afghanistan, held in Kabul with* broad participation from more than 50 countries and international and regional organizations, focused on

reconciliation, regional cooperation, the transition to Afghan leadership and ownership, and international support beyond 2014. The meeting was held as part of the lead-up to the forthcoming Istanbul Conference on Afghanistan, aimed at creating a stability compact, and to the international conference to be held in Bonn later this year, which will review progress on the transition goals and seek the long-term support of the international community in advancing the political process, including reconciliation and regional partnership.

A decade of international and regional interaction in Afghanistan is now leading to the emergence of a new silk road, defining the shared benefits of regional cooperation. This year we have engaged in increasingly concrete cooperation with our neighbours in the region, expanding the horizons of understanding and the scope of joint efforts. During President Karzai's visit to Islamabad last month, a promising future of close cooperation and the realization of a common vision with Pakistan was envisaged for peace as well as for development. That visit was followed by an extensive discussion with the trilateral framework of the Core Group of Afghanistan, Pakistan and the United States, which recently held its third meeting in Kabul.

During the most recent visit of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, India offered its support for Afghan-led reconciliation efforts and announced a significant increase in its assistance to Afghanistan. We also continue to conduct numerous exchanges with Iran, Russia, China, countries of Central and South Asia and the Arab world. The opportunities that a peaceful and stable Afghanistan can offer for prosperity and security in the region are ever more evident. We will continue our constructive engagement with regional partners to realize our common goals.

Securing Afghanistan and its future is about empowering the country, enabling it to stand on its own feet and take charge of its own destiny. In this regard, we look forward to the upcoming review of the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan as essential to aligning the role of the United Nations with the evolving needs of transition. We are convinced that a more harmonized, streamlined and coordinated United Nations, based on the Delivering as One approach, is vital to furthering the efficiency and effectiveness of the Organization in Afghanistan. We look forward to a lasting partnership with the United Nations during transition and beyond.

The Government of Afghanistan will continue to improve governance, enhance its fight against corruption and strengthen transparency and accountability in our national institutions. To that end, we will build on existing measures in order to ensure that anyone involved in illegal activities will be held accountable. The Afghan Government's recent apprehension of two senior executives of Kabul Bank implicated in financial mismanagement is testimony to our firm commitment to accountability and the rule of law. We have presented the Attorney-General's office with a list of all the accused individuals. A comprehensive investigation of the Kabul Bank fiasco is under way and should lead to reparation of debts and the bringing to justice of all the culprits in the case. We are convinced that the final outcome of the investigation will respond to the concerns both of the Afghan people and our international partners.

Ongoing consultations are under way to resolve the dispute that arose from irregularities occurring during our parliamentary elections. We are not facing a constitutional crisis. The Government of Afghanistan is fully committed to resolving the issue within the framework of a legal and political solution.

Far too many innocent Afghans have lost their lives as a result of prolonged violence, insecurity and fighting. The civilian casualties are not just about figures and numbers; they are about the loss of the innocent lives of men, women, children, village elders, health workers, teachers and aid workers. The Taliban has been primarily responsible for such killings and has displayed a total lack of conscience in pulling the trigger on innocent civilians or those who protect local people. However, the number of casualties caused by NATO forces, despite their own repeated calls for a commitment to protecting civilians, remains significant. We reiterate our call for an immediate end to civilian casualties.

As we move forward, we must think beyond ending the war and towards ensuring sustainable progress across all sectors: security, governance and development. Our goal remains a vision of a peaceful, stable, democratic and prosperous Afghanistan. For that to be achieved, we must build on the gains of the past and forge a feasible framework of cooperation with the region and a long-term partnership between Afghanistan and the international community. The coming years will be crucial to our joint success.

Together, we will be able to accomplish the task we began 10 years ago.

The President: I now give the floor to the members of the Council.

Mrs. Viotti (Brazil): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, for his briefing and his outstanding work in very difficult conditions. I also thank Ambassador Zahir Tanin for his statement.

Although the situation in Afghanistan has shown progress, the recent rise in security incidents is a painful reminder of the many challenges still ahead. Brazil is both saddened and alarmed by the recent signs of hostility against the presence of the United Nations in Afghanistan. We condemn in the strongest terms the brutal attack on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). I take this opportunity to reiterate Brazil's confidence in the work of the United Nations in helping to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development in Afghanistan and our support for the Afghan Government in the spirit of transition. We welcome the security enhancement project being implemented by UNAMA throughout the country.

Brazil is also concerned at the rising civil unrest in Afghanistan. After several years of war and violence, Afghan society should no longer have to endure the burden of war. The increase in conflict-related casualties should not be treated as a mere unintended consequence of the conflict. All concerned must continue to do their utmost to protect civilians and comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law. There can be no military solution to this conflict, and I think that we all agree on that. The Kabul process must be closely followed until the transition to full Afghan leadership and responsibility has been achieved.

Despite the current difficulties, the transition towards Afghan security responsibility must continue to advance. In the same vein, the implementation of the national priority programmes outlined by the Afghan Government is essential to building the capacity and infrastructure that Afghanistan requires in order to promote its social and economic development as the international military presence draws down.

In any scenario, reconciliation efforts remain central to a political solution to the conflict in Afghanistan. Dialogue is the path to a solid foundation for the country's future. Brazil supports the implementation of the measures agreed to at the Review Conference of the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme. Through an enhanced presence in Kabul, Brazil stands ready to work together with the Afghan people and their Government towards a future of peace and development.

Ms. Čolaković (Bosnia and Herzegovina): On behalf of my delegation, I would like to thank Mr. Staffan de Mistura for his comprehensive briefing and Ambassador Tanin for his statement.

We welcome the fact that the Government of Afghanistan has continued to implement the Kabul process, including the successful elaboration of 11 national priority programmes, out of 22. We express the hope that the financing issues related to those programmes will be successfully resolved in coordination with donors. The Afghan authorities must now show tangible results in other important national priority programmes, including those in the areas of justice and subnational governance, which are crucial for the better functioning of the State. We would like to commend the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for its important support for the implementation of the Kabul process.

With respect to the taking over of the responsibility of the Afghan authorities for security in the country, Bosnia and Herzegovina hopes that the recent incidents in Kabul and other areas will not have a negative impact on the transition which was announced in March by President Karzai and is supposed to start this month. We also took note of the recent announcement by the United States President, Mr. Barack Obama, followed by the United Kingdom and Germany, of a partial withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan. That means that the coming period will be crucial to Afghanistan's future and to assessing the work which has been done by the international community over these many years. In this regard, we particularly welcome UNAMA's role in facilitating dialogue among development partners and the International Security Assistance Force to ensure that the development perspective is taken into account in the transition planning.

Another important element for Afghanistan's future is the Afghan-led reconciliation and reintegration process. It is encouraging to see that

efforts to strengthen this process have continued to receive strong support from the international community, including the valuable work of the Special Representative and of UNAMA. Furthermore, the adoption of resolution 1988 (2011) and the establishment of the Taliban sanction regime also represent positive steps in support of reconciliation efforts.

We reiterate our position that reconciliation and integration are crucial elements of the peace process. We fully understand that such a process can be very sensitive in terms of the human and political aspects and that, consequently, it has the potential to encounter diverse obstacles. Nonetheless, we continue to believe that there is no alternative to an Afghan-led reconciliation and reintegration process and that such a process must be a priority in future. The progress that has been reported on the reintegration of insurgents is an encouraging sign, particularly because it includes Kandahar, which until now had not experienced significant progress in this field.

Although political developments in Afghanistan continue to advance in the right direction, the security situation in Afghanistan remains for us a cause of great concern. In particular, United Nations statistics show that last May was the deadliest month for civilians, with the number of persons killed representing a significant increase compared with 2010. Bosnia and Herzegovina condemns in the strongest possible terms the deadly attack carried out against Logar hospital on 25 June. It is simply not possible to justify such a crime against innocent civilians. We also condemn the recent attack against a hotel in Kabul and reiterate our condemnation of the deadly attack against the UNAMA compound in Mazar-e-Sharif, where three UNAMA staff members were among the casualties. It is important to continue to call upon all parties to the conflict to strictly comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and protect civilians while strongly stressing that killing civilians and innocent people is a crime.

We have also witnessed, as a direct result of the ongoing conflict, a considerable increase in the number of displaced persons. We share the Secretary-General's view that conflict-related displacements and the failure to provide reintegration support are not only humanitarian issues but important security concerns given their potential for destabilization. United Nations agencies have played a crucial role in supporting the return of Afghan refugees and displaced persons, as well as in the sustainable reintegration of those persons. In that context, we must not forget about the issue of the removal of unexploded explosive devices, since only 27 per cent of the areas contaminated with mines has been cleared.

We also commend the efforts of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in addressing the problem of illicit drug production, which remains a lifeline for anti-Government forces and terrorists. We are actively participating in the Paris Pact process as part of joint international efforts to suppress, if not eliminate, drug trafficking, which has a major impact on the security of both the countries of supply and the countries of demand.

Finally, we consider that all of the important issues relating to sustainable peace and stability in Afghanistan can only benefit from regional cooperation, including that of its neighbouring countries: Iran, Pakistan and India. We welcome the reinforcement of dialogue and cooperation. We also commend the efforts of Turkey aimed at supporting Afghan stability and economic development and the forthcoming Istanbul Conference on Afghanistan, to be held on 2 November 2011, as well as the commitments made by Afghanistan's neighbouring countries during the Fourth Conference of the Least Developed Countries, held in Istanbul, to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Afghanistan.

In conclusion, our thanks go to the Special Representative, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, the staff of UNAMA and all United Nations personnel in Afghanistan for their tireless and dedicated work.

Mr. Osorio (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me, first of all, to congratulate you, Mr. President, and wish you every success as you and your country assume the presidency of the Security Council this month. I would also like to thank the representative of Gabon, our good friend Ambassador Nelson Messone, who conducted our work last month with great equanimity and seriousness.

I would like to welcome and thank Mr. Staffan de Mistura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), and to thank him for his very comprehensive and serious presentation, which very clearly illustrated the various aspects of the current situation in Afghanistan, the reality factors that

should be closely borne in mind in the future and the outlook on the process of transition and future consolidation. I would also like to welcome Ambassador Zahir Tanin.

I would like to highlight the very important contribution of UNAMA in improving the stabilization and democratization process, as well as its determination to work in coordination with the Government in order to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development in Afghanistan. We consider it appropriate that, in accordance with its mandate, UNAMA continues to focus on supporting the Government in critical areas such as facilitating the political process for peace and reconciliation, security, governance, economic development and regional cooperation.

My delegation deeply regrets the increase in the number of security incidents, most especially the attacks on United Nations personnel and facilities that took place on 1 April. We welcome and support the activities conducted by the Special Representative to improve the safety of staff and the Government's commitment to continuing to support UNAMA. Nevertheless, of major concern is the increased frequency of public demonstrations against the international civilian and military presence. The greatest of attention should be paid to this situation.

Along the same lines, we commend the efforts geared to a transition towards greater Afghan responsibility and leadership and to continue to work in accordance with the timetable for Afghan forces to take the lead in security matters by the year 2014. That goal should be guided by progress on the ground. In that regard, the efforts of the International Security Assistance Force and of the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan are an important contribution to the creation of conditions that will enable national authorities to gradually assume responsibility for security and governance. We endorse continuing to build relationships with local authorities and community leaders that allow, as indicated by Special Representative De Mistura, the establishment of inclusive dialogue processes to facilitate reconciliation with all segments of the population.

The adoption of resolution 1988 (2011), by which the Security Council established an independent sanctions regime for individuals and entities associated with the Taliban and recognized a central role for the Government in delisting requests, was a decision that undoubtedly will contribute to the reconciliation process in Afghanistan and will help to build confidence between the parties.

Afghanistan faces many problems that could threaten the sustainability of the progress made so far. Violence remains one of the main factors, affecting progress and resulting in increased humanitarian needs and a number of civilian casualties and internally displaced persons. We reiterate our call on all parties to the conflict to fulfil their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law and to take all necessary measures in order to ensure the protection of civilians.

We emphasize the importance of the joint regional initiatives taken to combat the various aspects of the world drug problem that affect Afghanistan and the region. Constructive and ongoing participation by various actors, within and outside the region, involved in the implementation of common strategies in the fight against the world drug problem in all its aspects under the principle of shared responsibility and in a balanced manner contributes to stabilization and the promotion of mutual trust between neighbouring countries and beyond the region. My country, Colombia, reiterates its readiness to strengthen bilateral cooperation with Afghanistan in order to address this and other manifestations of organized crime.

Security is an essential condition for strengthening the rule of law, the exercise of fundamental freedoms and the establishment of foundations for economic development. Accordingly, the strengthening of the integrated strategic framework in order to achieve greater coherence in the Organization's efforts and in the implementation of programmes in support of the Kabul Process is a positive step forward to ensure unity in the United Nations and in the international community's actions in order to contribute to the exercise of Afghan sovereignty in all aspects of the future of its people.

Mr. Moraes Cabral (Portugal): I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his very comprehensive briefing as usual, as well as Ambassador Tanin for his very useful intervention.

I must begin my statement by recalling the attacks in Mazar-e-Sharif. The United Nations

Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and indeed the entire international effort in support of the Government and people of Afghanistan were brutally attacked in Mazar-e-Sharif last April. I hereby convey to the Special Representative Portugal's highest appreciation for the courage shown in the face of adversity and for the constant commitment that UNAMA's personnel showed to their mission. We commend their dedication. That is the guarantee that the losses suffered will not have been in vain.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2011/381), the Special Representative's briefing and Ambassador Tanin's statement have, I believe, covered the essential aspects of the situation in Afghanistan and shown us what it takes to make the transition a success.

Last spring was a hard time indeed. The security assessment indicates that insecurity persists and that the rising number of casualties, especially those involving civilians, is a clear sign that the battle for the future of Afghanistan continues. The recent attack on the Intercontinental Hotel underlines this situation in a very symbolic way. But this is a battle that must be won, not only on the ground against the enemy but also in terms of public opinion — Afghan public opinion, first and foremost, but also international public opinion.

Civilian casualties are evidently the cruellest face of war. Limiting civilian casualties must therefore rank at the highest level in the military command's priorities as a fundamental element in the war in Afghanistan, as in any other war. We are aware that significant efforts had been and are being made to decrease civilian casualties caused by military operations. We call upon military commanders to pursue these efforts with steadfast commitment.

It is clear, nevertheless, that it is the insurgents who are responsible for the vast majority of civilian casualties and for the growing numbers of innocent victims. I recall the Special Representative's mentioning last March the offer made to insurgents to bring forward their own numbers of civilian casualties, which went unheeded. I also recall the multiple steps already being taken to try to address damage to civilians caused by national and international forces. It would be extremely useful to build upon what is already on the ground and integrate the valuable advice, expertise and goodwill we are able to contribute in order to adequately compensate civilians for their justified grievances.

The Special Representative reports that a draft regulation on the women's protection centres is now under consideration by the Technical Legislative Review Committee of the Council of Ministers. Portugal is encouraged by the fact that this process has been allowed to proceed with the required inclusiveness so that the amendments that fully protect women's human rights were incorporated in the final version of the draft law. We are also pleased to see that UNAMA continues to raise awareness and monitor the implementation of the Law on the Elimination of Violence against Women. We commend UNAMA's continued efforts in terms of the protection and promotion of human rights as well as the role played by UN-Women. Portugal reiterates the importance it attaches to the participation of women in Afghan Government institutions, including the civil service.

Concerning the protection of children, which was mentioned by the Special Representative, I would also like to highly commend the initiative of UNAMA and UNICEF, in partnership with the Office of the Special Representative, on violence against children. The broad range of partners assembled by the United Nations agency and the Special Representative is an encouraging sign of public commitment to the rights of children.

Finally, we take note of the multiple efforts being made by the Afghan Government, both internally and externally. Abroad, recent regional steps towards increased cooperation, at both the bilateral and multilateral levels, are to be welcomed as Afghanistan reassumes its role as a fundamental crossroads of Asia. This shows how Afghanistan's neighbours can and should play a crucial role in the process of stabilization of that country, and indeed of the region, as underlined by Mr. De Mistura and Ambassador Tanin.

On the home front, significant challenges remain. We entirely second the affirmation in the report that

> "[i]t is vital that the transition be managed so as to lead to an improvement in security, as well as better access to essential services for the population" (*S/2011/381, para. 69*).

Transition is not only security, as Staffan de Mistura underlined. Military success on the ground must translate into an effective governance framework

and into strengthening the rule of law, institutions and public services in order to protect those gains from erosion caused by lack of accountability and disconnection from the population's needs. In this regard, the inauguration of the joint independent anti-corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee can only be applauded and its work strongly encouraged.

Recent developments at the institutional level, namely in the Parliament, have highlighted the need for renewed capacity for political compromise and adherence to the Constitution. The historical moment Afghanistan is living requires undivided focus and commitment. I am sure that decision-makers in Afghanistan are working hard so that this phase remains contained within the bounds of a growing constitutional democracy.

I conclude by saying that the transition is set to begin this month, and this is something to commemorate. Vast amounts of resources and political will are concurring to make July 2011 a point of departure rather than a point of arrival for Afghanistan and its people. It is up to us to continue to support, as allies and friends, the Government of Afghanistan and its people so as to achieve the success they deserve.

Ms. Rice (United States of America): Let me begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Council and by thanking the Ambassador of Gabon for his very able leadership last month.

I thank both Special Representative De Mistura and Ambassador Tanin. I want to thank Special Representative De Mistura for his briefing this morning and for his continued exceptional service in Afghanistan. I ask him to convey to the staff of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) the deep and abiding gratitude of the United States for the critical work they do in the face of considerable hardship. That hardship was again made tragically clear on 1 April, when a mob attacked the UNAMA compound in Mazar-e-Sharif, resulting in the deaths of seven United Nations staff members. We reiterate to their families and loved ones our deepest condolences. As always, we stand with the United Nations in the face of such a brutal assault, and again we urge fellow Member States to provide the United Nations with the resources it needs to reinforce its facilities and protect its staff.

Let me briefly highlight three top priorities for my Government in Afghanistan. First, as President Obama recently said, July marks the beginning of a responsible transition that will see Afghan forces gradually taking the lead in securing their own country. By 2014, this process of transition will be complete and the Afghan people will be responsible for their own security. As Afghan security forces move into the lead, the United States will continue to reduce its military footprint, and our mission will change from combat to support. As President Obama announced last month, the United States will withdraw 10,000 troops from Afghanistan by the end of this year. The remaining 23,000 surge troops he announced in December 2009 will leave Afghanistan by the end of summer 2012.

President Obama made this decision from a position of strength. We have made significant progress towards our goals. The United States military surge, together with additional troops committed by our allies and partners, has helped stabilize more of the country and shifted the momentum away from the insurgency. Afghan security forces have improved in quality and grown by more than 100,000 troops. In some areas, these improvements have already allowed for the transition of responsibility for security to the Afghan National Security Forces.

In the face of violence, terror and intimidation, as Ambassador Tanin noted, Afghans are defending their country, establishing local police forces, reopening markets and schools, and creating new opportunities for women and girls. We will continue to support them as they reclaim their country after decades of strife, long after our military mission has ended.

Secondly, even as we pursue this transition to Afghan security responsibility, we are redoubling our efforts to pursue a peaceful end to this conflict. We support Afghan-led initiatives to reconcile the Afghan people, including the Taliban. We have taken tangible steps to advance Afghan reconciliation and reintegration initiatives, including support to the Afghan High Peace Council and provincial police and reintegration councils.

As Secretary of State Clinton said in February and as President Obama reiterated in June, the necessary outcomes of any negotiation would have to include a commitment by reconciling insurgents to renounce violence, abandon any alliance with Al-Qaida

and abide by the Afghan Constitution, including its protections for women. As evidence of our seriousness, we champion the Council's decision to split the sanctions regime pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999) and to establish distinct sanctions for Al-Qaida and the Taliban. Resolution 1988 (2011) is an important tool for promoting reconciliation while isolating extremists, and it sends a clear message to the Taliban: There is a future for those willing to rejoin the fold of peaceful Afghan society.

Finally, let me touch briefly on an important part of Afghanistan's democratic development — its electoral system. Last year's parliamentary elections, the first run by Afghans since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, represented a historic step for the Afghan people. Afghan electoral institutions — the Independent Election Commission and the Electoral Complaints Commission — demonstrated professionalism throughout the process. They performed admirably, despite a difficult security environment and allegations of fraud.

We are consulting closely with Afghan officials and our international partners, including UNAMA, on the recent announcement by the special elections tribunal, which called for the electoral results of 62 seats in the Wolesi Jerga to be overturned. We urge Afghanistan's political leaders and all Afghan institutions to act within their clearly defined areas of competence, in accordance with the Afghan Constitution and electoral law, preserving the necessary system of checks and balances between the judicial, executive and legislative branches. The United States has been clear and consistent about the need for Afghanistan to detect and deal with fraud related to the election process, in accordance with the Afghan Constitution and democratic principles, as provided for by the mechanisms of the Independent Election Commission. It is important that Afghanistan's Parliament fulfil its constitutional role on behalf of the Afghan people.

Meanwhile, we must continue to strengthen the capacity of Afghanistan's electoral institutions. Long-term electoral reform remains key to the country's democratic future. As we look to the 2014 presidential elections and beyond, we must ensure that we learn the lessons of the past several years, for the benefit of Afghanistan's democratic future.

The year 2011 will be a pivotal one, capped by an international gathering in Bonn that will mark 10 years since the international community joined with the Afghan people to help chart a new path together. The past decade has seen great hardship and sacrifice, but it has also produced real progress. With common purpose and sustained commitment, we will continue to help the Afghan people build a more peaceful and prosperous future.

Mr. Wang Min (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General De Mistura for his briefing and Ambassador Tanin, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, for his statement.

One year ago, the Kabul International Conference on Afghanistan was successfully convened. Over the past year, through the efforts of the Afghan Government and people and with the help of the international community, positive progress has been achieved in the Afghan peace and reconstruction process. Meanwhile, Afghanistan is undergoing a critical period of transition whereby continued efforts are needed to achieve comprehensive and balanced development in all sectors — security, political, economic and social. In that connection, I would like to underscore the following five points.

First, China supports Afghanistan in its continued efforts to push through the Kabul process with the help of the international community. In order to achieve Afghan peace, stability and development, there is a need to fully respect its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity and to support its ownership and leadership, so as to genuinely achieve an Afghanistan run by Afghans.

Secondly, China is seriously concerned about the recent worsening in the security situation and the rising number of civilian casualties. We have noted that a certain country has announced that it plans to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan. We hope that in the transfer of security responsibilities to the Afghan Government, the parties concerned will earnestly assume responsibilities to help Afghanistan to strengthen its security capacity-building to ensure a peaceful and stable transition.

Thirdly, China supports Afghanistan in its national reconciliation efforts, fully respects the Afghan Government and people in their choice of their

own accord and hopes to see progress in its peace and reintegration programme.

Fourthly, with regard to peace and reconstruction, Afghanistan still needs the sustained attention and support of the international community. The international community must deliver on and fulfil its commitment to help Afghanistan and to continue to provide the country with assistance. The parties need to respect and implement the priorities identified by Afghans themselves in the context of the Afghan National Development Strategy.

Fifthly, China appreciates the active efforts of the United Nations to push through the Afghan peace and reconstruction process. We support the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in its continued efforts to play a central and leading role in coordinating aid to Afghanistan. We hope that UNAMA will strengthen its communication, coordination and cooperation with the Afghan Government.

As a friendly neighbour, China has consistently committed itself to friendly and good-neighbourly relations with Afghanistan. We attach great importance to our participation in reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. China will continue to provide assistance to Afghanistan within its capabilities and will work with the international community to contribute to peace, stability and development in Afghanistan.

Sir Mark Lyall Grant (United Kingdom): I should like to take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I also congratulate Ambassador Messone and the Gabonese delegation on their stewardship of the Council during the month of June.

I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2011/381), Special Representative of the Secretary-General Staffan De Mistura for his informative briefing this morning and Ambassador Tanin for his statement.

As other speakers have done, I extend the United Kingdom's condolences over the shocking deaths, in Mazar-e-Sharif in April, of staff of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). It is vital that dedicated United Nations staff can carry out their work in a safe and secure environment, with the full support of the Afghan Government and the international community. I would also like to pay tribute to all other international personnel for the sacrifices they have made in this campaign.

The British Prime Minister, David Cameron, has just returned from a visit to Afghanistan, where he saw at first hand the progress that the Afghan Government and the international community have made in preparing for the transition to Afghan-led security responsibility across the country. It is encouraging that the first areas are on track to begin the transition process on 20 July. The Afghan National Security Forces will continue to grow in size and capability as they prepare to take the security lead in all provinces by the end of 2014. The United States surge has helped to prepare for transition and, as Ambassador Rice has confirmed, will be drawn down as originally planned. Other international forces will also begin to withdraw as conditions allow. My Prime Minister announced earlier today that United Kingdom force levels will be reduced by a further 500, from 9,500 to 9,000, by the end of 2012. These are signs of progress, improved security and the growing strength of Afghan forces. But it does not signal the end of international support for Afghanistan.

The United Kingdom deeply regrets all civilian casualties that result from the actions of international and Afghan Government forces. When such casualties occur, it is despite the strong preventive measures that have been put in place. As the Secretary-General notes in his report, the vast majority of casualties are caused by the insurgents, who deliberately use violent tactics designed to intimidate the population. In the past quarter, the insurgency has continued to assassinate Government employees and to deliberately attack civilian targets, including hospitals, markets and the Intercontinental Hotel. Insurgent-related civilian casualties outnumber Afghan and international forces casualties by a ratio of approximately eight to one. We condemn such attacks in the strongest possible terms.

An Afghan-led political process is needed to underpin the military progress. To be durable, any political settlement must be inclusive and must respect the interests and rights of all Afghan citizens. The death of Osama bin Laden gives the Taliban an opportunity to make a decisive break with Al-Qaida. The British Foreign Secretary has called for the Taliban to make that break and participate in a political process. We urge the international community to call for the same outcome.

Fundamental to any political settlement and crucial to the future stability of Afghanistan is the safeguarding of democratic principles, including free and credible elections. The United Kingdom remains fully committed to working with the Afghan Government, Parliament and people to strengthen Afghan democracy and representative institutions. We are therefore deeply concerned that the dispute between the Special Court and Parliament remains unresolved. We call upon all parties involved to work together to find a solution in line with Afghan law and to respect the separation of powers that is guaranteed by the Constitution.

The current situation illustrates the need for further progress on electoral reform. We continue to support the role of the United Nations in assisting the Afghan Government, institutions and people as they take forward commitments made at the London and Kabul Conferences last year. This continues to form a vital part of the mandate of UNAMA.

Irreversible transition and progress on the political track must be supported by governance and development progress. Putting in place the necessary measures to allow an International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme will be crucial if we are to make progress on these issues. Following the incident of the Kabul Bank, we call for a rapid resolution to negotiations on a new IMF programme, and for those who have broken the law to be brought to justice. The Afghan people deserve no less.

Since the Secretary-General issued his quarterly report, important progress has been made preparing for the Afghan-led Bonn conference. Members of the International Contact Group had a constructive dialogue in Kabul. We now need to focus on translating these discussions into tangible outcomes, particularly on regional cooperation. We welcome the work led by Turkey in this area and look forward to the Istanbul Conference in November.

Finally, despite the challenges, significant progress has been made on the road to a secure and viable Afghanistan. As Afghanistan moves from being a post-conflict country to one with more traditional development needs, UNAMA and the wider United Nations family will play an increasingly important role. We therefore welcome the forthcoming review of United Nations activities. We hope that the Secretary-General will include an assessment of the delivery of UNAMA against its current mandate, its role in the post-transition landscape, and how the United Nations can support the Afghan Government in bringing about the emergence of a strong, durable and self-sustainable Afghan State.

Mr. Messone (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I, too, would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for the month of July. I take this opportunity to thank all of the Permanent Representatives and their delegations for the cooperation and support they offered me during Gabon's presidency of the Council in June.

I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Staffan de Mistura and Ambassador Tanin for the briefings they have just provided on the situation in Afghanistan on the basis of the report of the Secretary-General before us (S/2011/381).

First and foremost, I would like to express our strong condemnation of the recent acts of violence, which undermine the progress and achievements made since March. In fact, since our most recent debate on 17 March (see S/PV.6497), the situation in Afghanistan has seen major progress, particularly in the political transition process.

We are pleased to note the progress achieved in national reconciliation. In this regard, we welcome the fact that the Afghan Government has, at the request of the Security Council, committed itself to facilitating the reintegration of moderate insurgents, pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011). We also welcome the establishment by the Government of a joint independent committee to promote transparency and accountability within the Administration. We believe that this is an important element in the process of transferring responsibility, which was referred to by Ambassador Tanin a moment ago.

Despite these efforts, a number of obstacles remain, particularly in the areas of security and good governance. My delegation takes this opportunity to call once again on the new Afghan Government to do its utmost to strengthen its capacity to fight terrorism and corruption, which remain the major obstacles to peace and stability in the country.

As we stressed at the most recent debate, the security and protection of civilians must be priorities of the Government in its efforts to establish a sovereign

State based on solid and stable constitutional institutions. The Afghan authorities should assume their full responsibilities in this area.

The withdrawal announced this month of a large number of troops from some international forces, particularly those of the United States and NATO, confirm the major challenge that the Government has to meet in its attempts to fully assume it sovereign prerogatives. Here, we reaffirm our full support to the staff of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the United Nations for their assistance to the Afghan Government to that end.

In conclusion, we pay tribute to Mr. Staffan de Mistura for his unceasing efforts to support peace and stability in that country. With respect to the impending transition, we share his view that security must remain a priority, but that improved security must yield transition dividends based on improved coherence of international assistance and on inclusive and participatory dialogue. In closing, we reaffirm our support to UNAMA and United Nations personnel in Afghanistan.

Mr. Crowley (South Africa): Allow me to add the voice of my delegation to those of others who have congratulated you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of July, and to thank Ambassador Nelson Messone for his excellent stewardship of the Security Council during the month of June.

We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, for introducing the report of the Secretary-General on Afghanistan (S/2011/381). We also appreciate the participation of the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, Ambassador Zahir Tanin, in this debate.

My delegation welcomes the relatively positive developments that have taken place over the past few months in Afghanistan, particularly with regard to the progress towards greater Afghan leadership and ownership. These include progress in the implementation of the Kabul process, momentum on reintegration and reconciliation efforts, and cooperation between Afghans and their neighbours.

Despite these positive developments, Afghanistan continues to face critical challenges in its endeavour to achieve stability and development. Key among them are the security situation, the worsening humanitarian situation, human rights deficiencies and continuing civilian casualties. South Africa stresses that, given the magnitude of these challenges, a comprehensive strategy incorporating security, humanitarian issues, good governance and socio-economic development is required. In this regard, we would like to underscore the central role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in supporting the Government of Afghanistan and in coordinating international assistance to the country. Crucially, the continued role played by bilateral partners remains indispensable.

We are particularly concerned over the attacks directed against the United Nations and its personnel. South Africa condemns in the strongest terms the violent attacks against the United Nations operations centre in Mazar-e-Sharif on 1 April, which resulted in the death and injury of United Nations staff.

South Africa continues to welcome efforts to strengthen political outreach activities. Political dialogue and reconciliation among people and leaders remain critical to the long-term stability of Afghanistan. We are pleased that the High Peace Council has intensified its efforts to lead reconciliation efforts. This, together with efforts to reintegrate insurgents, including the Taliban, should be encouraged.

My delegation remains concerned by the plight of children caught up in conflict in Afghanistan, and in this connection we strongly condemn the attack on a school on Sunday by a suspected militant on a motorcycle, who threw a hand grenade at the gates of the school.

With regard to the role of women, my delegation is of the view that Afghan women have a significant role to play in securing the peace and stability of the country. Their role in building a new Afghan society should be welcomed.

National ownership and leadership remain crucial to political security and socio-economic progress in Afghanistan. On its part, the international community should continue its supportive role in the country's transition from conflict to stability and prosperity. South Africa therefore continues to support the presence and role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

In conclusion, we commend Special Representative De Mistura for completing the integrated strategic framework for a comprehensive review of UNAMA's mandated activities and the United Nations support to Afghanistan, and thank UNAMA and its personnel for their efforts in executing the mandate of the Security Council for a more peaceful and stable Afghanistan.

Mrs. Ogwu (Nigeria): I want to thank Special Representative De Mistura for his very inspiring and lucid briefing. I also want to thank Ambassador Tanin not only for his comprehensive briefing, but also for the tremendous courage that he has demonstrated even in trying times.

Nigeria welcomes the steady progress being made in Afghanistan. The quest for honourable peace and stability has been steadfast. A new Constitution is in place; several elections have been held; economic growth seems promising; the new counter-insurgency strategy bolsters recent military gains; and donor commitment to funding civilian reconstruction remains very strong. We believe that these political developments should be consolidated through a rigorous reconciliation and reintegration process involving Taliban and non-Taliban insurgents, especially in the Kandahar area.

As the report of the Secretary-General (S/2011/381) cautions, we must be vigilant in ensuring that the reconciling parties are indeed genuinely committed not only to the new code of conduct delineated by the Government, but also to upholding the Constitution. The political process must be led and driven by Afghans and in accordance with the Constitution. It must promote not only lasting peace and stability, but also the protection of the interests of women. A successful political process will serve to underpin the ongoing efforts of the Government to improve governance and accountability, including the unimpeded participation of women in the peace process.

The Government should remain committed to its anti-corruption agenda and its obligations arising from the London and Kabul conferences. A greater commitment of the Government to its anti-corruption agenda and its obligations arising from the London and Kabul Conferences will strengthen these efforts.

On the security sector, the recent attacks on the United Nations operations centre in Mazar-e-Sharif and on the capital's premier hotel are tragic reminders of the tense and fragile security situation in the country. We condemn such cowardly acts, which indiscriminately target innocent civilians, security forces and the personnel of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). The perpetrators of those attacks must be brought to justice. Indeed, such attacks undermine the capacity of the Afghan security forces and raise questions about the readiness of the Afghan authorities and security forces to meet the security challenges ahead. We support the urgent strengthening of the implementation phase of the security transition process through enhanced training and capacity-building and greater cooperation between the United Nations and ISAF forces.

The participation of the Afghan Government in the listing and de-listing process will provide a more secure platform for the fight against terrorism, especially against the background of the Kabul communiqué. That is why Nigeria supported the decision to split the Al-Qaida and Taliban sanctions regimes. In this regard, we wish to reiterate that such de-listing requests should be addressed by the Committee on a case-by-case basis, and especially on their own merits.

In the economic sphere, Nigeria commends the Government's continued commitment to implementing the national priority programme in accordance with the Kabul process. Implementing the programme and meeting the Government's set benchmarks will require greater coordination and timely international assistance on the part of the donor community. We support the channelling of donor funds and other assistance to the country through the Afghan budget system in order to ensure greater coherence and efficiency.

The current socio-economic growth and the Government's prioritized programme, including education and health care, will suffer reversals if a viable solution to the continued impasse on the International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme is not urgently found. We therefore support the setting-up of an appropriate mechanism that the Government and donors alike can utilize to advance and implement the IMF programme.

On regional cooperation, we welcome the growing cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbours, especially in overcoming counter-terrorism challenges and combating drugs, arms, human

trafficking and organized crime. We welcome the revival of the tripartite meeting between Afghanistan, Pakistan and the United States. Both developments reaffirm the commitment of regional partners to Afghanistan's stability, economic development, territorial integrity and sovereignty. It is our hope that the tripartite initiative will be sustained as we all look forward to the Istanbul Conference scheduled for 2 November and the international conference of foreign ministers scheduled to take place in Bonn at the end of this year. Through these conferences, the international community can renew its commitment to and support the Afghan-led peace process.

The future and destiny of Afghanistan may defy imagination, but the international community must be eternally vigilant to make certain that it is a future of peace, security and, indeed, genuine reconciliation and development. In this formidable endeavour, we commend Special Representative Staffan de Mistura for his inspiring and exceptional leadership of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. The distinctive accomplishments of the staff of the Mission and their invaluable contributions to the concerted global effort to restore democracy, peace and security to Afghanistan will endure eternally.

Mr. Pankin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for July. I wish you every success. I also wish to thank the Gabonese delegation for its June presidency and work.

We are grateful to Mr. Staffan de Mistura for his substantive and frank analysis of the situation in Afghanistan and for introducing the report of the Secretary-General (S/2011/381). We welcome the statement made by Ambassador Tanin, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan.

We agree with their assessment of the measures being taken by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), pursuant to its mandate. We share their evaluation of the ongoing difficult security situation in Afghanistan, as reflected in a number of serious incidents over the course of recent months. I refer first and foremost to the tragic attack in April on the United Nations office in Mazar-e-Sharif and the deaths of United Nations staff. We were also shocked by the killing of former Deputy Minister of the Interior Daoud in Takhar province in May and by the attacks in June on the hospital in Logar province and the car of the Governors of Badakhshan and Parwan provinces, as well as by the recent Taliban attack on the Intercontinental Hotel that led to the deaths of innocent civilians. We strongly condemn all of these terrorist acts.

These insurgent attacks show that the Taliban movement is pursuing its attempts to destabilize the situation in Afghanistan and to undermine the efforts of the international community towards the post-conflict reconstruction of the country. The leadership of the Taliban is neither acting on behalf of the Afghan people nor working towards lasting peace and a prosperous, independent Afghanistan.

The Russian Federation is particularly concerned about the situation in northern Afghanistan, where a number of high-profile terrorist acts have taken place. Those acts have had repercussions in Central Asian States, including our partners in the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. In the light of the continued efforts of terrorists of the Taliban and Al-Qaida, a targeted and measured approach is necessary to implement the plan for national reconciliation.

We hope that the recent changes to the sanctions regime pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999) will boost the efforts of the Afghan Government to implement its national reconciliation strategy, give added impulse to addressing the problem of an Afghan settlement and enhance regional security — conditions that were all agreed to by the international community.

In that context, we note the reaffirmation in resolution 1988 (2011) of the important principles of national reconciliation in Afghanistan, including the renunciation of violence, respect for the Afghan Constitution and the renunciation of ties to Al-Qaida and other terrorist organizations. Under these criteria, it is unacceptable to de-list Taliban leaders from the United Nations sanctions regime list. A dialogue with Taliban leaders can be carried out only under Afghan leadership. Any contact with them, in particular outside official channels, could send the wrong signal from the international community in the context of an Afghan settlement.

We are also particularly concerned about the consequences of implementing a plan for the long-term enhancement of the military presence in Afghanistan

after 2014. We believe that the establishment of a neutral status for Afghanistan is necessary. The Presidents of the Russian Federation and the United States spoke in favour of this idea in their joint statement of 24 June 2010, and members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization also supported it in the Astana Declaration of 15 June. Of course, the initiative on this issue lies with the Afghan people themselves — not in the near future, but when the stabilization of Afghanistan is complete. The establishment of Afghanistan's neutral status, if accepted, could, we believe, facilitate dialogue on reconciliation.

We are concerned about the drug trafficking situation in Afghanistan. There is no doubt whatsoever that drug trafficking in Afghanistan is a threat to international peace and security, as reflected in resolutions 1943 (2010) and 1974 (2011). Neutralizing this threat requires joint efforts and the pooling of all possible capacities. Unfortunately, the coalition forces have not focused sufficient enough attention on this issue. My country believes that the foreign military presence in Afghanistan can and should play a more proactive role in dealing with drug manufacture and trafficking, particularly since they have assumed responsibility for security in Afghanistan. Our recommendations remain valid with respect to real-time interaction on that track among our partners in NATO, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Collective Security Treaty Organization.

We are deeply concerned over the death of civilians through the indiscriminate or disproportionate use of force by military forces. Under the norms of international humanitarian law, the responsibility for guaranteeing the security of the civilian population lies with all parties, including the international forces. The Russian Federation will continue to favour the central coordinating role of the United Nations in international efforts to ensure a solution to the situation in Afghanistan. Effective and impartial United Nations support for the implementation of the provisions of the outcome document of the Kabul Conference on Afghan ownership of the country's administration will guarantee long-term stability in Afghanistan.

Another important aspect of achieving long-term stability is United Nations control of the manner in which the international forces implement Security Council mandates. Those forces are on Afghan territory under the auspices of the Security Council and can withdraw only pursuant to a decision of the Security Council upon fulfilment of their mandate. They do not have the right to leave Afghanistan without fulfilling their anti-terrorism tasks or establishing an effective Afghan army and police.

My country believes that the drawdown of United States forces announced by United States President Barack Obama will be offset by an increase in the capacities of the Afghan National Security Forces, which should be ready to control security and effectively counter extremism and drug trafficking.

Ms. Ziade (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish at the outset to express Lebanon's gratitude to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, for his briefing and to Ambassador Tanin of Afghanistan for his statement. I also commend the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for its efforts in Afghanistan, in particular in view of the difficult circumstances on the ground.

Ten years after the international military intervention in Afghanistan, we are now bearing witness to the dawn of a new era with the transfer of authority to the Afghan people. Yet, the security situation remains alarming. Violence against international and Afghan forces and against the Afghan people continues at an accelerated pace. This situation has led to a greater need for vigilance at the security level during the transitional phase in order to return power to the hands of the Afghans and to ensure the safety of civilians and their property. All parties are called upon to respect international humanitarian law and to make every effort to spare the lives of innocents.

In the context of the search for a political solution to the crisis, Lebanon commends efforts to achieve reconciliation and reintegration. Specifically, we underscore the role played by the High Peace Council and the Security Council's support for the reconciliation process through its unanimous adoption of resolution 1988 (2011), which splits the sanctions regimes for the Taliban and Al-Qaida and provides members of the Taliban with the opportunity to disassociate themselves from terrorist ideology and respect the Constitution in order to participate in the peace process.

No less important than the security and safety situation is the issue of strengthening respect for human rights in Afghanistan. Specifically, efforts should continue to be made to enforce laws regarding

acts of violence against women in every province. Women should be protected against discrimination, injustice and coercion, and should be integrated into public life. These are things that the Organization has repeatedly called for.

Moreover, we would like to underscore the significance of the allegations in the Secretary-General's report (S/2011/381) concerning the ill treatment and abuse of detainees, who are often deprived of legitimate defence counsel as well as being arbitrarily detained without charge or trial. It is essential to good governance that such gaps in the areas of the rule of law and institutions be dealt with.

We should also emphasize the importance of continued commitment to the Kabul Process, particularly in the context of social and economic development. The reform of public institutions is also crucial to transparency and accountability. We would also like to add our voice to the call made by Secretary-General in his report concerning the need for the creation of an International Monetary Fund country programme. The lack of such a programme is having a generally negative effect on projects and programmes around the country.

In addition, efforts within Afghanistan should be accompanied by dialogue and regional cooperation. Neighbouring countries can — indeed, it is in their interest to do so — strengthen their ties with Afghanistan and contribute to improving the safety and security situation by monitoring borders and combating drug-trafficking and transnational organized crime.

We would like to emphasize our appreciation for the international community's efforts in general and in particular those of the United Nations, through all its agencies. United Nations staff are working courageously and determinedly under very difficult circumstances to build an Afghan State that is capable of protecting its own people and institutions, with a view to safeguarding the lives and prosperity of all Afghan men, women and children.

Mr. Vinay Kumar (India): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council, and to commend the Permanent Representative of Gabon and his team for having steered the work of the Council in June. I would also like to thank you, Sir, for scheduling today's debate on Afghanistan. And I thank Ambassador Zahir Tanin, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, for his statement. We are grateful for the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2011/381) and appreciate the briefing by Special Representative Staffan de Mistura.

Afghanistan is at the beginning of the implementation stage of the transition whereby its security forces will start to assume their responsibilities in seven key areas, including Kabul. This is a critical phase for both Afghanistan and the international community. We are deeply concerned that the challenges confronting Afghanistan, particularly on the security front, do not appear to be receding. On the contrary, the overall security environment continues to deteriorate. The Secretary-General's report notes that there has been a 51 per cent increase in security incidents compared with the same period in 2010, characterized by a significant increase in suicide attacks, abductions and assassinations. The terrorist attacks on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) compound in Mazar-e-Sharif and the Government buildings in Kandahar, and the coordinated suicide attack at the highly secure Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul and on a hospital in Logar, confirm a change in tactics whereby the Taliban and other opposition groups are opting for soft civilian targets.

As was pointed out in our statement on this subject on 17 March (see S/PV.6497), such attacks point to a dangerous osmosis of ideologies, ambitions, training and operations among the terrorism syndicate in the region, with suicide terrorism as its main technique and targets not limited to Afghanistan. The international community, in its hurry to withdraw from a combat role in Afghanistan, will ignore this at its own peril. It therefore becomes crucial that the transition be linked to the realities on the ground rather than to a rigid timetable.

A constant assessment and review of the evolving situation, in coordination with the Afghan Government, is essential in that regard. We appreciate the enhanced collaboration between the International Security Assistance Force and the Afghan National Security Forces in building the requisite strength and capabilities of the Afghan forces, which, along with adequate enablers, is essential to the transition of security responsibilities. It is important that the transition be Afghan-owned. It must also be planned and implemented in a systematic manner and must

ensure the protection and promotion of the human rights of all Afghans.

For the security and stabilization of Afghanistan, it is important to isolate and root out the terrorism syndicate that includes elements of Al-Qaida, the Taliban, Lashkar-e-Taiba and other terrorist and extremist groups operating within and outside Afghanistan's borders. These groups are ideologically and operationally fused, and their bonds have strengthened over the years. As the Secretary-General's report points out, the insurgency in Afghanistan remains resilient, demonstrating a capability for launching multiple complex attacks. The insurgents' continued resilience, their changing tactics, their numbers and their spread to areas previously considered safe are a grim reminder that security gains will remain transient unless the international community is able to deal firmly with safe havens for terrorist groups outside Afghanistan's borders.

India fully supports an Afghan-led, inclusive and transparent process of reconciliation, adhering to the guidelines enunciated by the Afghan Government in the Kabul and London communiqués. This must be accompanied by an inclusive political process and intra-Afghan dialogue. It is important that the antecedents of those willing to reintegrate be ascertained, and that it be ensured that they are genuinely reconciled.

We support the views and decisions of the Government and people of Afghanistan as they seek to build a more secure, stable and prosperous future and a strong democracy in their country. The Afghan people must be allowed to rebuild their land in conditions of peace and security, free from interference by their neighbours, and they must be the arbiters of their own destiny. It is our expectation that the new sanctions regime established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) will enable the Afghan Government to have a greater say in confronting the challenges posed by those who constitute a threat to the country's peace, security and stability.

Afghan ownership and leadership are vital to development and reconstruction in Afghanistan. This also implies greater coherence, coordination and further streamlining of the international community's development efforts, including aligning assistance with Afghan national priorities and increasingly working through Afghan institutions. We are happy to note that UNAMA continues to align its priorities with those of the Afghan Government.

India and Afghanistan share a strategic partnership based on a strong foundation of rich bonds in history and civilization, and on the shared pursuit of regional peace and prosperity. India remains committed to partnering with the Government and people of Afghanistan in the building of a peaceful, stable, democratic and prosperous nation. India's assistance programme is spread throughout Afghanistan and covers almost the entire gamut of economic and social development activities. Assisting Afghanistan with its reconstruction efforts, with capacity-building and skills for developing human resources, and with building its public institutions is a special priority area for India. As Ambassador Tanin mentioned in his statement, during his last visit to Afghanistan, from 11 to 13 May, our Prime Minister announced additional assistance of $500 million over and above India's existing commitment of $1.5 billion.

Afghanistan's stability and economic development depend greatly on its neighbours and the region as a whole. Closer economic integration with India and other countries in the region is the key to Afghanistan's future prosperity. The area of Afghanistan south of the Hindu Kush all the way up to the Ganges delta form a part of a single geographic and economic basin, with the plains of India constituting the centre of its economic gravity. It is by far Afghanistan's largest regional market — a potential source of investment, skills, training, technology and expertise and a model of democracy and national institution-building in a culturally comfortable context.

Afghanistan has immense potential as a land bridge linking Central, West and South Asia and emerging as a trade, transport and energy hub. The recent developments in regional cooperation, including the signing of the agreement on the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project, would provide added impetus to regional cooperation. Growing economic interdependence would catalyse peace and prosperity in the region at large and in Afghanistan in particular. Afghanistan, as a member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) since 2005, is becoming an increasingly active SAARC member. India, as a neighbour, will continue its efforts towards the greater integration of Afghanistan into the regional framework.

In conclusion, we commend the good work done by UNAMA and we think that at this critical juncture, it is imperative that the international community continue to remain steadfast in its support for the Government of Afghanistan as per its priorities.

Mr. Araud (France) (*spoke in French*): I should of course like, Sir, to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council and to thank the representative of Gabon for his skilful conduct of the work of the Council during the month of June. I wish also to thank Mr. De Mistura for his presentation on the situation in Afghanistan and would like to associate myself with the statement to be made later by the representative of the European Union. In addition, I should like to thank Ambassador Tanin for his statement.

I should like at the outset to start by paying tribute to all United Nations staff working in Afghanistan. The Security Council reacted in the aftermath of the 1 April attack against United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) headquarters in Mazar-e-Sharif, an attack that was all the more revolting given that the men and women who were murdered there were working for the stabilization, security and development of Afghanistan.

The attack should not make us deviate from our main goal, which is to help the Afghan Government move ahead on the path towards full sovereignty. In that regard, the transition process has begun. This new phase of our commitment is leading, as of this year, to the gradual and orderly transfer of security responsibilities to the Afghan authorities. France will remain committed, along with its allies, alongside the Afghan people so as to ensure that the transition process is completed, as scheduled, at the end of 2014, be it in our area of deployment or with respect to the training of the Afghan security forces. Our commitment in Afghanistan is long-term and will be adapted so as to take account of the new context of transition. The planned redeployment of French troops will take place in close cooperation with our allies and the Afghan authorities. However, we must be careful to ensure that that the transition process also leads to the assumption of responsibility by the Afghan Government for both governance and development.

Much remains to be done, and time is of the essence. We must ensure greater involvement of the Afghan people in the planning and implementation of development projects. For its part, the Afghan Government must wage a more resolute combat against corruption and nepotism, as evidenced by the Kabul Bank situation.

Progress has also been noted in the area of budget performance through the decentralization of public expenditures and the further strengthening of capacities in the planning and implementation of development projects in the provinces and districts.

Turning to the issue of security, we have resumed the military initiative and thereby made it possible for the Government of Afghanistan to regain a foothold in several areas. The country's army and police force are growing stronger with our support — financially and in terms of training, making it possible for the allies to envision a gradual withdrawal of some of the combat forces in Afghanistan.

Our military and training efforts are starting to bear fruit, at the cost, however, of very arduous combat. Military gains will be short-lived if they do not take place in a context that reinforces the legitimacy of the Afghan authorities and that makes it possible to envisage a political solution to the conflict. Unfortunately, the court-created uncertainty that affects the legislative powers is detrimental to the proper functioning of democratic institutions and is distracting them from the real concerns of the Afghan voters. We call on all Afghan institutions to work in the context of their respective competencies, as set out in the Constitution and on the basis of the principle of the separation of powers. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General must continue to monitor the situation and electoral reform, which the country needs.

We have, however, also noted the progress made on the path to inter-Afghan reconciliation. We continue to support the efforts of President Karzai and the High Peace Council to develop a peace process involving all segments of Afghan society. Such a process must be supported by regional efforts that take into account the security interests of Afghanistan's neighbours while respecting its sovereignty. The United Nations can from that point of view play a useful role.

By separating the sanctions regime of the United Nations for Al-Qaida and the Taliban, the Security Council took a very significant decision which, we hope, will motivate the Afghan people to turn their

backs on international terrorism, undertake direct dialogue and look to the future together.

France would like to conclude by reaffirming its full support for the efforts of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Staffan de Mistura. The Security Council, through its resolution 1974 (2011), renewed the mandate of UNAMA and confirmed that the priorities it outlined two years ago were the right ones. The Council also requested that a full review of the activities of UNAMA and of the United Nations in Afghanistan be carried out by the end of 2011. This will represent an opportunity to reflect on the evolution of the commitment of the United Nations in that country. The review must take place in a context of full transparency, working with the Afghan authorities. That process, the second Bonn Conference and the renewal of UNAMA's mandate in 2012 all represent opportunities to reiterate our commitment to the common goal of a democratic, independent and prosperous Afghanistan that has definitively turned its back on violence and instability.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Germany.

Let me join others in warmly welcoming and thanking the Special Representative for his briefing today. We equally thank Ambassador Tanin for his statement.

My Government aligns itself with the statement to be made later by the European Union (EU).

I will touch upon three issues today.

First, with respect to transition, Germany welcomes the fact that the process of security transition is progressing, in line with the improved quality and quantity of the Afghan security forces. My delegation welcomes in particular the beginning of a security transition in the first tranche of seven districts and municipalities to Afghan security responsibility this month.

It is important to underline that, as per the agreement between NATO and the Afghan Government, the transition period will continue to be gradual and condition-based. The number of security incidents in recent months illustrates clearly the magnitude of the challenges still ahead of us. We believe, however, that the strategy and need for timeliness agreed between Afghanistan and the international community will continue to serve us well, and we intend to stay the course.

Germany condemns the ongoing violence, and particularly, in the strongest terms, the latest attack on a hospital in Logar. We note with continued serious concern a further increase in civilian casualties, up to 90 per cent of which are now caused by insurgents. We commend the professional reaction by the Afghan security forces during last week's heinous attack on the Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul.

Here in the Council, I would like to stress in particular the security of the United Nations. Like everyone here today, Germany greatly appreciates the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and of other colleagues of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) under most challenging circumstances. But as we expect UNAMA to continue with its indispensable work, we have a shared responsibility to do everything we can to protect United Nations staff and operations. Mazar-e-Sharif was another shocking experience for the United Nations community, and we extend our condolences to all the families of the victims. Germany calls for maximum efforts, including by the Afghan Government, to protect international support operations in Afghanistan.

Secondly, with regard to the Kabul process, the transition agenda described in the process will, over time, also change the nature of international support. However, it is the strong expectation of the international community that United Nations resources and expertise are made use of to preserve the progress achieved and to build a sustainable partnership with a viable State based on Afghan leadership, democratic principles and respect for human rights and reliable governmental and non-governmental institutions, founded on a firm constitutional basis.

One of the determining factors for the success of the Kabul process is a solution to the Kabul Bank crisis. There is no substitute for credible financial institutions. Germany concurs with the report's assertion that the absence of an International Monetary Fund programme seriously endangers the Kabul process and the ability to increasingly channel development support through the Government budget.

Thirdly, let me briefly touch upon preparations for the international conference on Afghanistan to be held in Bonn in December, which some members have

mentioned and which Germany looks forward to hosting upon the request of the Afghan Government. On the whole, the conference is about shifting more weight onto the long-term and political components within our common Afghanistan strategy. As was decided by President Karzai, the three main aims of the conference to be chaired by Afghanistan are to further define the civilian aspects of the transition process until 2014, to strongly confirm and define long-term international support for Afghanistan beyond 2014, and to contribute to the political process of reconciliation, including its regional dimension. We expect that the Bonn conference will be an important milestone on the way to a stable Afghanistan at peace with itself and its neighbours.

In that context, Germany considers the recent split of the sanctions regime under resolution 1267 (1999) into separate Al-Qaida and Taliban regimes as an important stepping stone.

Let me end by reiterating continued and long-term German support to our Afghan friends and by underlining our appreciation for UNAMA's role and the wider support of the United Nations. Germany considers UNAMA and the United Nations system as co-partners in a successful transition in the interest of all Afghans.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Nishida (Japan): I would like to thank Special Representative De Mistura for his very comprehensive and informative briefing. I would also like to express my gratitude to all the men and women of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) who have demonstrated a deep commitment to fulfilling this very difficult mission. I also thank Ambassador Tanin for his statement.

At the outset, I would like to express my deep regret over the 1 April attack on UNAMA in Mazar-e-Sharif. I offer my deepest condolences to the families of the United Nations personnel who died in that attack.

As Special Representative De Mistura stated at the last Council debate on this topic in March (see S/PV.6497), 2011 is a crucial year. It is a year of transition, leading up to 2014. Japan is determined to continue to cooperate with UNAMA during this very important year and beyond.

As stated in the recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2011/381), the security situation in Afghanistan continues to be challenging. We are concerned about the security risks that were highlighted by the recent attack on the Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul. I express my deep condolences for the deceased. Security remains a priority that we must tackle.

Japan supports President Obama's announcement regarding United States policy on Afghanistan. The transition is scheduled to start in seven areas this month. It is indispensable for peace and security in Afghanistan to conduct a smooth transition during the drawdown of United States and other international forces.

The transition and sustainable security are interlinked with the country's political process and development. In that context, Japan continues to play its role in strengthening the Afghan National Security Forces through assistance to the Afghan police, such as through our continued funding of police salaries and efforts undertaken to enhance administrative capacity in both central and provincial Governments. Japan recently decided to support the Literacy for Empowering Afghan Police programme and will start to train Afghan National Police in cooperation with Turkey this month.

There remain other concerns. The situation regarding the Kabul Bank is a serious issue that affects international donors that are providing funds and the framework of international assistance as a whole. The disqualification by the Special Court of parliamentarians elected last year, and previously confirmed by the Independent Election Commission, has resulted in tensions between Parliament and the Court that may seriously affect the stability and reconstruction of Afghanistan. This development comes at a critical time for maintaining solidarity in the country. We sincerely hope that the Afghan Government, Parliament and courts will act within their respective competences and address these issues properly and expeditiously.

We welcomed the successful Review Conference of the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme, held in Kabul on 10 and 11 May. Further progress in the reintegration process constitutes an

important pillar of the political process. We highly appreciate the significant roles played in this process by UNAMA and the countries concerned. Japan is determined to continue to contribute, as evidenced by our $50 million contribution to the reintegration fund for achieving irreversible progress in the Afghan-led Reintegration Programme.

In that context, the recent adoption of Security Council resolutions splitting the Al-Qaida and Taliban sanctions list was a positive step towards promoting reconciliation in the country. Further progress in the political process requires Afghan ownership with continued support of the international community.

For long-term stability in Afghanistan, we have to accelerate regional cooperation among the country's neighbours. Japan is ready to play an active role in the economic development of the broader area, which can enable surrounding neighbours to pave the way for integrating Afghanistan into the regional and global economy.

Despite having been affected by the March earthquake, Japan is determined to implement our assistance to Afghanistan which, in view of the importance of Afghanistan, we committed to in November 2009. While the drawdown of the military presence will soon begin, long-term engagement with Afghanistan is still very important. I would like to stress once again that coordination between responsible Afghan ownership and support from the international community are now more necessary than ever in order to realize a sustainable economy. This should be based on a mid- to long-term perspective so that, after the full transition to Afghan leadership beyond 2014, Afghanistan can become self-reliant for its economic development.

I believe that there is a solid commitment by the international community for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. We expect further progress during the Afghanistan conference in Bonn in December. On the Afghan side, the country needs to strengthen its capacity for achieving real Afghan ownership and leadership. A comprehensive review of the UNAMA mandate and of United Nations support in Afghanistan, which is requested in resolution 1974 (2011), will be a very important task for the United Nations in steering the future course of Afghanistan. UNAMA continues to play an important role and Japan continues to do its utmost to contribute to its activities.

In conclusion, we would like to express our sincere appreciation for the dedication of Special Representative De Mistura and to reiterate our commitment to support the efforts of UNAMA.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Rivard (Canada): Afghanistan is entering into a pivotal period, and it is likely that its long-term transformation into a secure and stable democracy will be greatly influenced by events and decisions made in the near term.

An improved security situation remains paramount to our efforts in Afghanistan. While counter-insurgency efforts have been successful in reversing insurgent momentum in southern Afghanistan, violence is increasing in areas that were previously considered secure. Security will need to improve significantly in order to provide the space needed for Afghanistan to grow and develop.

All civilian deaths resulting from the violence are tragic, and we take every step possible to avoid civilian casualties due to the operations of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). However, the overwhelming majority of those deaths are caused by the insurgency. Indeed, civilians are often the primary targets of insurgents. That was tragically illustrated in the recent attack on the Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul and the recent use by insurgents of an 8-year-old girl as a suicide bomber. We condemn these tactics of desperation, which contravene international law, and we demand that they cease.

The Government of Afghanistan and ISAF have recently begun the process of transitioning lead security responsibility from the international community to Afghan authorities. Canada, through the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan, is committed to increasing the number and improving the quality of personnel of the Afghan National Security Forces, who will be crucial to maintaining peace in the country. To that end, Canada will provide up to 950 Canadian Forces personnel and up to 45 civilian police from 2011 to 2014 to help train the National Security Forces. We may be drawing down in Kandahar, but we remain committed to supporting Afghanistan.

(*spoke in French*)

Stability and security in Afghanistan cannot be achieved by military means alone. There is a need for a

process of political reconciliation between the Government of Afghanistan and the insurgency. For lasting reconciliation to be possible, it will be necessary for insurgents to renounce violence, sever ties with Al-Qaida and recognize the Afghan Constitution. While we agree that the time for peace talks is now, there are Afghans who are genuinely afraid that the gains made over the past 10 years in democratization, human rights and the delivery of basic services could be lost. The ongoing discussions must be cognizant of this concern and ensure that peace will benefit all Afghan citizens.

Canada shares the view of many Afghans and members of the international community that, over the longer term, lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan will require an inclusive healing process. This must involve all parts of Afghan society, including Afghan women, in long-term efforts that seek to rebuild relationships and resolve historical grievances that, if left unaddressed, could undermine durable peace in Afghanistan.

Canada, alongside our international partners, is working closely with the Government of Afghanistan to ensure that the civilian aspects of transition — strengthening governance and development — are coordinated in such a way as to support the success and irreversibility of the overall transition. Successful transition will depend on concerted effort and the serious political commitment of Afghanistan's leadership to ensure effective, inclusive and accountable governance.

Afghan Government capacity to provide services and opportunities to ordinary Afghans must continue to be built and nurtured. In that respect, the Afghan Government-led Kabul process and the national priority programmes continue to be important tools for both the Afghan Government and the international community. Now, we must facilitate implementation of the national priority programmes, linking them to the security transition and ensuring that they provide tangible benefits in areas such as access to health care and education for ordinary Afghans. It will now be important for the programmes to be fiscally sustainable and realistic. In that regard, the international community will need to help Afghanistan increase its capacity to generate revenue during this period. The private sector will also have an important role to play in the country's development.

It is also crucial that Afghans be able to trust their elected officials to represent their interests at the district, provincial and national levels. Corruption erodes confidence in democratic institutions and undermines efforts to stabilize the country. It remains a serious issue and could be a major obstacle to successful transition in the coming years. The Afghan Government must therefore take concrete and visible actions to combat corruption and prevent it from derailing the transition agenda.

(*spoke in English*)

Countries of the region also have a significant role in Afghanistan's success or failure, as well as in the overall stability of South and Central Asia. It is crucial for Afghanistan and its neighbours to overcome the deep-seated historical distrust and conflicting interests that are often at odds with regional stability and economic logic. Political differences continue to block progress on what could be win-win initiatives on the economic front, which could contribute enormously to lasting stability and prosperity in the region.

We look forward to the Afghan-led Afghanistan conference in Bonn in December, which will focus on issues of importance to the transition process. There are several such conferences on Afghanistan scheduled for 2011 and, while it is of absolute importance that we continue to have an open and candid dialogue, we need to muster real political will to see tangible progress.

In the past 10 years, significant, quantifiable progress has been made in Afghanistan in key areas. We are all focused on the same goal — the transition of responsibility for security, governance and development to the Government of Afghanistan. The Afghan Government and the international community are united in their determination to meet this objective, and Canada will continue to play its active role.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Haroon (Pakistan): We would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the Council's presidency for the month of July, as well as to thank you for convening today's debate.

I would like to especially mention with appreciation the briefing by Special Representative of the Secretary-General Staffan de Mistura. Pakistan always values the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), which

is ably led by Special Representative De Mistura. I hope that the rumours of his not continuing in his post are not true.

The Secretary-General's quarterly reports are an important barometer of political and security developments in Afghanistan. I would like to emphasize that they provide useful indicators to gauge the progress and setbacks in our collective efforts for peace in Afghanistan.

First, the period under review marks the beginning of implementation of the transition towards greater Afghan leadership and ownership, as envisaged in the Kabul Process. This is a point that Pakistan drives home in every meeting held in the Security Council. Secondly, it coincides with the start of the comprehensive review of UNAMA's mandate as set out in resolution 1974 (2011). We believe that UNAMA's priorities in this period should continue to be defined along the lines of facilitating national reconciliation, supporting governance and promoting socio-economic development in Afghanistan, which is perhaps the least so far to show an upward incline in its graph.

With regard to the ongoing comprehensive review of the UNAMA mandate, which is to be completed in 2011, I must emphasize that Afghan ownership and respect for the sovereignty of Afghanistan in all areas must be ensured. Greater harmonization of UNAMA's work with the goals of transition as well as coordination within United Nations bodies have to be essential ingredients of the new mandate.

Is Afghanistan heating up as we come closer to hypothetical withdrawal dates? Well, I would like to reiterate that the Secretary-General's report has documented a 51 per cent increase in security-related incidents in Afghanistan during the reporting period. The report rightly expresses concern at the human cost of the conflict, characterized by a steady rise in civilian casualties resulting not only from the insurgency but also from military operations.

Allow me to concede that the security challenges in Afghanistan are complicated by three decades of war, the capacity of Afghan security forces, the presence of foreign forces and the exploitation of socio-political complexity by criminals and drug traffickers. The problem of security in Afghanistan does not lend itself to near-facile explanations exemplified by externalization and a self-defeating blame game.

Violence and instability in both Afghanistan and Pakistan are a threat. We are therefore extending all possible cooperation to Afghanistan in the areas of security and intelligence. A viable mechanism for such cooperation is the Tripartite Commission, which meets regularly and includes the United States and the International Security Assistance Force.

The number of our military and paramilitary personnel deployed along the border with Afghanistan is greater than that of all international troops present inside the whole of Afghanistan. Pakistan's commitment to peace in Afghanistan is unwavering. The cause of regional and international peace will not be served if Afghanistan becomes a theatre of proxy wars or if its land is used for extraterritorial subversive activity.

A long-term solution to security challenges in Afghanistan lies in workable reconciliation and reintegration processes. An Afghanistan at peace with itself can best ensure its own security. The Secretary-General's reports and the briefings by his Special Representative have rightly pointed out the linkages between reconciliation and security.

Pakistan supports an Afghan-led and inclusive reconciliation process, with a view to bringing the opposition groups into the political mainstream. We believe that the engagement of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and UNAMA with the reconciliation process is going to be helpful.

We emphasize the need to ensure that the newly created Afghanistan-specific Sanctions Committee contributes effectively to curbing the insurgency and promoting reconciliation in Afghanistan. This must be seen to happen. We hope that UNAMA's cooperation with the Security Council Sanctions Committee on Afghanistan will go a long way towards adding professional and political input for listing and de-listing.

Pakistan will continue to assist the Afghan-led reconciliation process, including through the Afghanistan-Pakistan Joint Commission for Reconciliation and Peace in Afghanistan. The first meeting of the Joint Commission was held in Islamabad last month, on the eve of the visit of President Hamid Karzai. Both our countries have affirmed the resolve to work closely for lasting reconciliation and peace in Afghanistan. As a follow-up to the Islamabad meeting, the first working-level

meeting of the Joint Commission was held last week in Kabul. It has been decided to set up specialized working groups to move forward in a responsible and sure-footed manner. Make no mistake, this process is very active and shall produce beneficial results.

Our quest for peace and stability in Afghanistan is dovetailing into a long-term cooperative partnership. Today's *Washington Post* headlines of hundreds of militants crossing over from Afghanistan to attack a Pakistani border village, with some killed, will not deter us from this process. My advice to my friend is that all peace processes normally come to the point where this sort of activity takes place through militants who would like to prove the peace process to be otherwise. We will not succumb to it.

Despite the utmost efforts of those militants crossing over to create havoc and derail the process, let me reaffirm that we will not let that happen. The Islamabad declaration signed during the visit of President Karzai to Pakistan last month documents the contours of this partnership in the areas of trade and the economy, transport, connectivity, and project cooperation in infrastructure, energy and minerals, as well as in enhancing parliamentary exchange and people-to-people contact. International assistance in these areas, especially corporate-sector engagement, can catalyse rich dividends for peace and prosperity in the region.

The Secretary-General's report has noted that just over 19,000 refugees returned to Afghanistan from Pakistan in the past three months. This figure can hardly be called encouraging. We need greater attention on this issue. But of course, no matter what happens, we are hosts to the largest refugee population in the world.

I would like to conclude by reiterating our support for the objectives and efforts of UNAMA, especially those of Special Representative of the Secretary-General De Mistura. We are confident that the redoubtable people of Afghanistan will overcome all pressing challenges and seize new opportunities for a brighter and prosperous future. Pakistan shall remain their committed and steadfast partner.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Pedro Serrano.

Mr. Serrano: I would like to thank you very much, Mr. President, for giving me the floor to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU).

The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Iceland, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Serbia and the European Free Trade Association country Norway, member of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this declaration.

I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Staffan de Mistura for his briefing and the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2011/381) on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security. Our thanks also go to Ambassador Tanin for his presentation.

This month of July marks the start of the transition to an Afghan security lead. The European Union welcomes the impending handover of security responsibility from the International Security Assistance Force to Afghan forces in seven areas of the country. In that context, we are encouraged by the Secretary-General's assessment that the performance of these forces has improved as a result of focused training and capacity-building efforts. At the same time, we can read that insecurity is on the rise, which is an indication that the insurgency remains resilient, making transition harder. The statistic of a 51 per cent increase in security-related incidents over the same period in 2010 underscores just how much harder. That is why it is important to recall that the transition process does not signify withdrawal, but a gradual shift to a genuine supporting role, and is not calendar-driven but conditions-based. By carefully managing the transition, we are slowly but surely fulfilling the wish of the Afghan people to take responsibility for their own security.

Creating the conditions for a successful transition throughout the country requires further progress towards good governance and development and on the political track. The stakes for better governance are high, and measures such as improving transparency of and oversight over public finances and fighting corruption therefore deserve high priority.

On the one hand, the European Union welcomes positive steps, such as the launch of the joint

independent anti-corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee. On the other, we notice that, out of all the national priority programmes of the Kabul process, the ones dealing with public administration and subnational governance were among the least advanced. This is especially unfortunate, since for several reasons, these programmes are also among the most important.

As the Secretary-General remarks, in a post-transition Afghanistan, with donors working more through the central Government, less development funding will flow directly to local authorities. Without a stronger and more reliable connection to the centre and without better subnational governance, there is a risk that these provinces and districts will be starved for aid.

A more immediate impediment in the area of governance to the disbursement and distribution of development funding is the continuing lack of an agreement with the International Monetary Fund on the consequences of the Kabul Bank collapse. If Afghanistan is to take full responsibility for its own development and if more development funds are to be channelled through Afghan institutions — which President Karzai has called an integral part of the transition — then this bank crisis needs to be resolved. This is an issue of great concern for the European Union and its member States, which are jointly spending more than €1 billion a year in Afghanistan.

Resolving the Kabul Bank crisis and, more generally, implementing governance and other commitments of the Kabul process, such as the modernization of the justice sector and electoral reform, require resolving the controversy between the Afghan executive branch and Parliament. The European Union calls for this to be done in a way that is both quick and consistent with the separation of powers.

Further steps towards more effective and legitimate Government institutions are vital not only to development cooperation, but also to progress on the political track. Better governance would help convince all Afghans that settling differences by force should no longer be an option in the future and that the political arena should be the only place to fight.

In this context, the European Union welcomes the recent decision of the Security Council to split the Al-Qaida and Taliban sanctions regimes — a decision sure to boost reconciliation and reintegration efforts. On the ground, these Afghan-led efforts benefit from the support of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), which continues to promote confidence-building measures through advocacy on access to basic services, detainee release and the protection of civilians. Civilians, as the report confirms, still bear the brunt of the conflict, with 80 to 90 per cent of the civilian casualties linked to anti-Government elements.

Reconciliation should not only be Afghan-led, but should also never stray from its fundamental principles: the rejection of Al-Qaida, renunciation of violence and respect for the Constitution. Securing peace at the cost of international law and inalienable human rights, including women's rights and the rights of religious minorities, would lead to a pyrrhic victory. This does not amount to some utopian ambition to make Afghanistan a perfect place; it simply amounts to upholding the values that this world body and the European Union were founded on.

At our most recent debate on this item (S/PV.6497), when its mandate was on the agenda, we spoke extensively about UNAMA. That is why today I will limit myself, in conclusion, to once again expressing the European Union's support for its crucial role during the transition, including as co-chair of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board, a body in need of further strengthening.

We commend Staffan de Mistura and his staff for their commitment and courage, and condemn in the strongest terms attacks perpetrated against UNAMA. The United Nations is doing important work in Afghanistan for all Afghans, and we strongly support its continued engagement there in the short and long terms. We count on UNAMA in the new phase ahead — a phase of great opportunity and also great peril. Nevertheless, as they say in Afghanistan — and I hope this is accurate — there is a path to the top of even the highest mountain.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Çorman (Turkey): Let me begin by warmly greeting Ambassador Tanin and Special Representative of the Secretary-General De Mistura. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2011/381) and his Special Representative for his insightful briefing.

We are grateful for the dedicated and outstanding work that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) is carrying out in fulfilment of its mandate, under the effective leadership of Special Representative De Mistura, in the face of very real and serious threats, as evidenced most recently by the attack against the UNAMA compound in Mazar-e-Sharif on 1 April. We strongly condemn and deplore this heinous attack, and extend once again our condolences to the bereaved families of those who lost their lives, as well as to the UNAMA personnel and the entire United Nations family.

We also condemn the recent spate of attacks by insurgents against Afghan targets, which have resulted in an increased loss of innocent civilian lives. These attacks cannot be tolerated, and they will not deter the Afghans and the international community from the pursuit of a peaceful, secure and democratic Afghanistan.

Afghanistan is going through an historic period of transformation. Afghanistan's neighbours and other relevant actors in the region and beyond should respect Afghanistan's sovereignty and continue making their multidimensional contributions towards solidifying it. The transition of security responsibilities, the peace process and economic development are all at the core of efforts towards realizing the ultimate goal of full Afghan ownership. If one of these processes fails, the overall body of work will also falter.

Afghan leadership of all processes related to Afghanistan is a fundamental principle. Security is a primary enabler that would facilitate development, governance, the rule of law and institutional capacity-building. In the past six months, military operations have reached unprecedented levels, yet lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan can be founded only on a political solution. Therefore, the necessary time and space must be given to the Afghan peace process when windows of opportunity for reconciliation arise.

The prospects for peace in Afghanistan are stronger than ever, and let me underscore that the durability of peace in Afghanistan requires that it encompass all segments of society, because enhanced national unity is the single most important basis upon which lasting peace and stability would take hold. While the training of the Afghan National Security Forces is essential to fulfilling the transition by the end of 2014, civilian capacity-building and economic sustainability will be just as important post-2014. We urge all donors to intensify their contributions to civilian capacity development and economic viability.

A benign regional order is an indispensable pillar of Afghan peace, sovereignty, development and prosperity. In turn, Afghanistan's peace, sovereignty and prosperity would constitute indispensable pillars of the peace and prosperity of its neighbourhood. In this regard, we will continue to pursue efforts in support of the regional dimension discussed at the regional countries' meeting, hosted by His Excellency Ahmet Davutoğlu, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkey, in Istanbul on 10 May, which is referenced in the Secretary-General's report.

The preparations for the Istanbul Conference on Afghanistan, to be held in Istanbul on 2 November 2011, have been launched. The meetings of the International Contact Group's regional cooperation working group, held respectively in Istanbul and Kabul on 3 and 26 June under the co-chairmanship of Turkey and UNAMA, have been useful in eliciting broad support in the region and beyond for the upcoming Istanbul Conference.

A set of commonalities are already emerging. The 2002 Kabul Declaration on Good-neighbourly Relations (S/2002/1416) was a groundbreaking document. The 2007 Istanbul Statement on Friendship and Cooperation in the "Heart of Asia" (S/2010/70, annex) went even beyond the Kabul Declaration by setting up a common regional vision, and constituted a welcome milestone.

But since Istanbul last year, the regional work, as well as circumstances and requirements, have moved on significantly, and we hope that all of this will be put on paper in a format that will then be undersigned by the Istanbul Conference participants. We know that this is what Afghanistan wants from the regional meetings.

We therefore intend the Istanbul Conference to be a turning point in the regional dimension.

As always, we look forward to the strong support of the international community, the importance of which has already been emphasized in the Secretary-General's report. We will be working closely with Afghanistan, the United Nations and all other relevant countries and organizations in the run-up to the Istanbul Conference on Afghanistan, which is slated to be one of the top international events of this year.

The President: I give the floor to Special Representative De Mistura to respond to the comments that have been made.

Mr. De Mistura: I have three brief points. First, I thank Council members for all their comments. We have taken due note of the comments, advice and support offered by each member of the Security Council and beyond.

Secondly, on behalf of all my 900-plus colleagues, I also wish to thank all participants for their very kind and warm words regarding the sacrifice that my colleagues are making and the sad events that took place in Mazar-e-Sharif. It does help.

Lastly, I believe that Ambassador Tanin and I will bring back to Kabul a strong message of support and of the consistent interest and engagement of the international community in Afghanistan. I think that that will help us during the difficult months ahead leading up the Istanbul Conference and Bonn.

The President: The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.